

**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND THE
SOVIET STATE**

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THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND THE SOVIET STATE

BY

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PREFACE

THIS little book is written in order to give to English readers an objective and summary account of the history of Russian Christianity before and after the Soviet Revolution. There is now a growing desire in this country to understand Russia and the Soviet State as they really are, avoiding both undue idealization of them and unmerited depreciation. Each nation and régime possess their good and their bad points, and everything must be seen in due perspective. A truly lasting friendship between individuals, groups or nations can be founded only on the truth, however bitter or disagreeable it may be sometimes.

It is useless to deny that the Russian Church, since Peter the Great anyhow, was closely controlled and dominated by the State, and for that very reason suffered a good deal after the collapse of the Imperial régime. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the Bolshevik party, which dominates the Soviet State, is pledged by its very programme to work to uproot religion altogether, as incompatible with the Marxian philosophy of life. The clash between the Church, which was to lose much after the fall of the Empire, and the Bolshevik party, which was pledged to establish a godless State, was inevitable. In this clash many churchmen perished, defending their beliefs and opposing the anti-religious legislation of the Soviet State.

The story of this conflict between the Church and the State is given in the present study. As far as possible this little book is a strictly documentary one. All sources are fully quoted and they may be taken as reliable. Most of the quoted sources are the Soviet official documents, statistics and accounts. There are also some official Vatican and Orthodox documents. Finally, a few writers with intimate personal knowledge of the Soviet régime, such as Anton Ciliga, Dr. Julius Hecker, and others, are used in this book.

I hope this book will be of interest and benefit to English readers who are interested in the fortunes of the Christian Church in the Soviet Union and look forward to a lasting friendship between the English and Russian peoples, based on truth and understanding.

SERGE BOLSHAKOFF.

December, 1941.

INTRODUCTION

THE development of the world crisis and the Russo-German war offer Christian churchmen in England an opportunity to consider how far Russian Christianity has survived twenty-four years of the godless State, by what means survival has been achieved, and what are the present position and future outlook. It is, indeed, not easy to answer these questions with any exactitude, but, nevertheless, it is possible. The Russian experience will be profitable to English churchmen because it shows how the attack upon the Christian faith may be met and overcome. In my short study I will endeavour to quote reliable sources and statistics and to avoid unnecessary generalizations and fanciful pictures.

There are two chief dangers when one studies the problem of Christianity in Russia. Some people, optimists by nature, are inclined to see everything through rose-coloured glasses; according to them the great storm which overwhelmed Russia in 1917 did very little harm to Russian Christianity, but rather helped it by loosing the iron bonds imposed upon it by the Imperial Government. There is some truth in this contention. The Soviet Revolution did indeed separate the Church from the State constitutionally, but it subjected the Church to so many restrictions that even the former bonds seemed ideal in comparison. The pessimists, on the other hand, argue that Christ-

ianity in Russia is so weakened that it will scarcely be able to survive one generation more. There is also a germ of truth in this statement. Undoubtedly many millions of Russians apostatized, the younger generation have been carefully educated in the godless school, and the social influence of the Church is much weakened. Against these clear and painful facts must be ranged the greater vitality of the Church, purified by the blood of martyrs, and its wonderful adaptation to the new forms of life and society. Christianity in Russia is far from being dead. It not only survives, but gradually and almost imperceptibly it regains much of its former influence, as incontrovertible facts testify. To make the picture as clear as possible I divide my study into five chapters. In the first I deal with Russian Christianity before the Soviet Revolution. In the second chapter I study the causes, ideology and events of the Revolution. The third chapter describes the godless movement. The study of the present position and the outlook for Russian Christianity in future form the two last chapters.

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CHAPTER I

RUSSIAN CHRISTIANITY

AT the fall of the Empire in 1917 the Russian Church was already well on the way to completing its first thousand years of existence. It was a magnificent Church from many points of view. Its dominion extended over one sixth of the whole land surface of the globe, inhabited by 130 different peoples. Its membership was estimated as reaching 110 millions on the eve of the Revolution.* There were about 70 dioceses, ruled by 130 diocesan bishops and their assistants.† In 1914, according to the report to the Holy Synod of the Russian Church, quoted by Dr. Julius F. Hecker in his *Religion and Communism*,‡ there were in the Russian Empire 57,173 churches and 23,593 chapels, served by 112,629 priests and deacons. About 30,000 of the churches may be considered as parochial ones and the remainder as missionary and daughter churches. 550 monasteries and 475 convents had 92,259 members. The landed estates of the Church comprised about 19 million acres. It possessed also numberless houses and commercial enterprises, and its annual income equalled £50,000,000. The bank deposits of the Church, seized at the nationalization of banks, reached nearly £800,000,000 in

* *Veritas* (French Dominican monthly leaflet), October-December, 1936.

† *Ibid.*

‡ Chapman and Hall, London, 1940, p. 194.

English money. There is no reason to discredit the figures given by Dr. Hecker. John Shelton Curtiss, in his book *Church and State in Russia*, shows quite convincingly how wealthy the Russian Church really was. The vast numbers of the Russian clergy were educated in 58 seminaries, which had 19,386 students, taught by 1,162 teachers, in 1905. Besides these seminaries, 185 ecclesiastical schools, attended by 29,601 pupils, taught by 1,970 teachers, prepared boys to enter the seminaries.* The Church possessed also 57 diocesan schools for the daughters of the clergy and over 40,000 parochial schools. Religious instruction was obligatory in all schools, including universities. Nor was there any lack of Church institutions of every kind, learned and popular periodicals, various fraternities and societies. The Russian missions, besides evangelizing the Caucasus, Siberia and Turkestan, were flourishing in Japan, China, Corea, America, Persia, Palestine and Syria. The four great theological academies of Kiev (founded in 1631), Moscow (1701), St. Petersburg (1797), Kazan (1797), studied Russian theology, educated bishops and Church leaders, and trained missionaries.

By the side of this picture of power, wealth and expansion must be placed the not less brilliant picture of the spiritual activity and the great social influence of the Church. In a thousand Russian monasteries were found great mystics and directors of conscience, to listen to whom crowds of pilgrims of every age and station in life flocked continually. Sarov, Optina, Valaam, were particularly prominent. In Sarov lived and died the last canonized Russian saint, Fr. Serafim, famous for his profound mystical teaching.

* P. Aurelio Palmieri, *La Chiesa Russa*, p. 557. Firenze, 1908.

To Optina belongs the glory of having influenced powerfully many Russian writers and thinkers, such as Gogol, Dostoevski, Leontiev, Tolstoy, Soloviev and Rozanov. Two incomparable spiritual writers, masters of the mystical and ascetical theology; Bishops Theophan the Recluse and Ignatius Brianchaninov, educated whole generations of Russian churchmen by their letters and treatises. This saintliness was by no means confined to the monasteries. It lived in the secular clergy as well. Fr. John Sergiev, Dean of Kronstadt Cathedral, was a kind of Russian *Curé d'Ars*. Crowds of people from every part of Russia came to him to be reassured, pardoned, healed. Nor was Fr. John an exception. There were many others like him. The Russian Church included not only mystics and devout priests, but also theologians of great depth, clerical and lay, like Bolotov, Glubokovski, Brilliantov, Khomiakov, Khrapovizki, Uspenski, etc. The social influence of the Church on the masses of the people was very great, as the crowds of pilgrims to every monastery and shrine testified. Nor was this influence confined to the masses. In the highest ranks of society and among eminent thinkers and scientists the Russian Church had numerous adherents. The beauty of its services, the rich symbolism of its rites, the perfection of its music kept within the Church many people who did not understand its teaching properly but blindly believed that what was clothed in such supreme beauty could not be false.

Nevertheless this brilliant picture had its reverse side. Everything in this world is a mixture of divine and human, good and evil. The Russian Church had also its weak sides. Of its 110 millions of faithful

many millions were purely nominal churchgoers, illiterate, half-pagan peasants, who interpreted Christianity in their own way. Many of them professed the Orthodox faith for no better reason than that their ancestors had done likewise and everybody else in their neighbourhood did the same. To be a free-thinker was something improper, antisocial. So a man would remain in the Church. Besides, its beautiful rites and music had a strong appeal to the dreamy and poetical side of the Russian Slavs. The average peasant understood well enough the moral teaching of the cross, of sin and of redemption, but he was frequently in doubt on many other points. A clever and well designed attack on fundamental belief in God could easily overwhelm him and make him a convert to a different creed.

There was something wrong with the Russian clergy too, which was a caste, in which the son or the son-in-law succeeded to the father in his charge. For centuries many sons of clergy received orders without any real vocation. The priesthood was for them merely a profession. Again, clerical education was unsatisfactory. It is true that the Russian seminaries gave an education just as good as that given in an average Roman Catholic seminary or a Protestant theological school, but it lacked spirituality. If the intellectual level of the education was good, its devotional aspect left much to be desired. However, the theological academies, with their collegiate system and careful selection of pupils, provided a fine education, both scholarly and devotional.

The Russian secular clergy, except in cities, were rather poor and much preoccupied with the problem

of maintaining and educating their large families. The Russian priest received his income from several sources: parish endowments, state salary, and fees for ministrations. Mr. Curtiss in his book says that the annual income of an average Russian village priest in the last years of the Empire may be taken as being £70. It was quite a small income even in Imperial Russia. It just kept the priest above the average peasant or the ordinary factory hand. In the cities the economic position of the clergy was much better and their income higher. The annual income of a city priest may be taken as £100 or more on the average. Incomes of £400 a year were common, and then a priest was a man of means, for living in Imperial Russia was cheap. The life of a Russian priest, particularly in villages, was spent chiefly in conducting liturgical services and administering sacraments. He also instructed the schoolchildren in religion. Preaching was rather irregular, visiting rare, and charitable activities few. The village priest lived a rather isolated life. He was far above the peasants intellectually and socially, but was an alien and out of his depth in the country houses of the nobility, where he had little or no influence.

The life of a city priest was more like that of an English clergyman. However, even in towns the priests had but little influence over the nobility, intellectuals and high society circles, who were in most cases free-thinkers, if not outright atheists. The middle class and merchant princes were the stronghold of the Church in the towns. The number of devout workmen was considerable, but a large proportion of them were under the spell of the Marxian

theories or affiliated to the numerous Evangelical sects, which were always popular with the Russian workmen.

The Russian hierarchy, closely controlled by the State, lived in opulence and were engrossed in bureaucratic activity. The dioceses were enormous according to European standards; some were as large as the whole of Great Britain. They included hundreds, even thousands, of parishes, numerous monasteries, schools, and institutions, served by a large personnel. Administration took much of the Bishop's time; he was usually helped by one or more episcopal assistants. The diocese usually was coterminous with a province, and the bishop ranked equal to the governor or even had precedence over him. He lived in a palace or an episcopal monastery, surrounded by a court of monks and chaplains. His income was usually large, even very large, sometimes reaching several thousand pounds. The episcopal incomes in Imperial Russia were derived from so many sources that it is almost impossible to find the exact figures. Curtiss illustrates that well. According to one source, the Archbishop of Novgorod enjoyed an annual income of over £30,750, but according to another only £1,500. Clearly one estimate is unduly inflated and the other much understated. As all Russian bishops were monks, their income was more than sufficient. The social distance between the bishop and his clergy was tremendous. On the one side there was a great magnate, ranking with the first persons in the Empire, and on the other side there was a crowd of people socially little above the average well-to-do peasant. The similarity to the French Church before 1789 is striking. The Russian bishops were usually learned,

devout and dignified men, but they were put in such conditions that they could do really very little for the Church, except administer their dioceses ably.

We come now to the relations between the Church and the State, which require a short study of Russian Church history. The Russian Slavs, who inhabited Eastern Europe in the early Middle Ages, were nature-worshippers until about the ninth century, when the Scandinavian traders and robbers introduced Christianity to some of their cities, notably Kiev. The Russian Slavs lived in small and scattered communities, given to hunting and agriculture. Their economic organization reminds one strongly of the Bolshevik soviets and kolhoses. There was no political unity and cohesion between them. The Scandinavian adventurers and traders, travelling frequently along the Volhov, the Lovat and the Dnieper from the Baltic to the Black Sea, gradually conquered the Russian Slavs and united them into one single state under the house of Rurik. Rurik's great-grandson Vladimir, Grand Duke of Kiev, persuaded the population of his capital to be baptized in 988. It is very difficult to say how and from whom St. Vladimir received his first missionaries—from Bulgaria or from Byzantium; but the fact remains that very soon the Russian Church became a province of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. For more than two centuries all Russian primates and the bishops, with some notable exceptions, were Greeks directly sent from Constantinople. Naturally they spread in Russia Byzantine theories, customs, rites, and manners.

The Byzantine Empire of the tenth century, renewed by great emperors of the Macedonian dynasty, was a

brilliant State. Its bureaucracy, army, and schools surpassed anything in the West. The arts and science flourished according to the standards of the period. The Byzantine Church was famous for the beauty of its worship, the learning of its theologians, and the deep spirituality of its mystics, but it had one terrible blemish. It was unquestionably dominated by the State. The emperors elevated and deposed patriarchs and bishops, changed the boundaries of provinces and dioceses, supported or exterminated religious theories according to their fancy, convened Councils, and published canons by their own authority—as, for instance, Justinian, Leo VI, and others. Many emperors looked upon themselves as set up by God to rule Church and State alike. It is true that there was in existence the other theory of the relations between the Church and the State advanced by the Emperor Basil the Macedonian. This “symphonic” theory propounded equality between the ecclesiastical and the civil powers and harmonious co-operation between the Patriarch and the Emperor. Though formally accepted by all concerned, the symphonic theory did little to change the actual state of things, which was the domination of the Church by the Emperor. In Russia, however, the symphonic theory was actually followed for centuries and with the most beneficent results. The refined and cultured Byzantine prelates, subjects of powerful emperors, were not inclined to accept the domination of the barbarian Grand Duke and princes, nor were the latter strong enough to curb the powerful bishops.

Indeed, the princes were only too anxious to please the bishops, for this reason. The Grand Duke Yaroslav

the Wise, dying in 1054, divided Russia between his sons into a number of principalities, acknowledging the head of the house as the Grand Duke of Russia and their overlord. His sons subdivided their principalities between their own children, and soon Russia was a loose federation of numerous small principalities continually at war between themselves. The power of the Grand Duke became a shadow. These numerous princes, anxious to gain the support of the Primate and his bishops, conferred upon them rights, privileges, exemptions, estates, etc. The Primate and the bishops continually acted as mediators in the feudal wars, protectors of the people, helpers of the poor. As foreigners and men of culture they were little interested in Russian home affairs and cared only for the rights and privileges of the Church. They were, at the same time, opposed to any claim of the Church to dominate the State but sincerely sought co-operation with the civil authorities for the well-being of the people. Of course they introduced to Russia many Greek contemporary theories, rites, and customs.

Thanks to the Byzantine prelates Russia soon became anti-Latin, though the first sovereigns of Kiev were friendly to the West, as their marriages testify. Yaroslav the Wise was the father-in-law of the Latin Kings of France, Hungary and Norway. Russian monasticism is much indebted to Mount Athos, where its founder, St. Anthony (eleventh century), received his religious training. It is a debatable question whether the use of the Slavonic language by the Russian Church was really an advantage. Its teaching was absorbed by the masses more readily in consequence, and the Church soon became a national institution, though its

prelates for centuries were foreigners. On the other hand, the Russian clergy were never stimulated, nor indeed had the ability, to study the rich Byzantine literature as the clergy of the West were forced to study Latin Church literature. Slavonic translations from the Greek were confined in the main to liturgical books. Even the Bible was fully translated into Russian Slavonic only as late as the fifteenth century. The great writings of the Greek Fathers were practically unknown.

The Mongol invasion of Russia in the thirteenth century improved the position of the Church *vis-à-vis* the State. The whole fabric of the Russian State of the Kiev era collapsed, but not the Church. The Great Khans of Mongolia were very tolerant of the religious beliefs of the conquered nations. They recognized at once the Church's right of self-government, freed the clergy from all taxation, and allowed to them freedom not only of worship but also of religious propaganda. The Russian primates were formally confirmed by the Great Khan in their office just as the Grand Duke was himself. It must be noted that the Mongols did not turn Russia into a province ruled by Mongolian governors, but only made the Russian principalities the vassal states of the Great Khan and the Russian Grand Duke a supervisor over them, responsible for peace and the regular payment of the tribute. Besides, only one part of Russia became part of the Mongolian Empire. The northern republics of Novgorod and Pskov, members of the Hanseatic League, remained independent and the western Russian principalities were absorbed gradually into the kingdoms of Poland and Hungary

and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The power of the Grand Duke and princes was very weak during the first decades of the Mongolian domination. The authority of the Primate, on the contrary, increased still more. Besides the dioceses in Mongolian Russia, all dioceses of the North as well as in Hungary, Poland and Lithuania obeyed him. Everywhere the Primate defended his flock, pacified the opposing parties in the feudal wars, and advised princes. Beside him the Russian grand dukes, continually struggling to maintain their authority against the Great Khan and the subject princes, were mere shadows. The various Russian princes tried to gain the support of the Metropolitan in order to increase their power or even to obtain the grand dukedom. The princes of Moscow finally succeeded in persuading the Metropolitan Peter to fix the primatial see, transferred from Kiev to Vladimir during the Mongolian wars, at their own capital.

Very soon after this the Princes of Moscow became Grand Dukes of Russia with the continuous support of the primates, particularly St. Alexis. The primates were still mostly Greeks, though native Russians were appointed with increasing frequency. The Mongolian invasion, the influence of the Latin Empire, and the weakening of Byzantium made the power of the Patriarch of Constantinople over the Russian Church less and less effective. The growing strength of Russia, combined with the efforts of the last Byzantine emperors to achieve unity with the Roman Church in order to obtain military aid from the West against the Turks, made the Russians suspicious about Greek Orthodoxy and morale. The last Greek

Primate of Russia, Isidore, went to attend the Council of Florence in 1439 and signed there the decree of union with the Latins, who were by now thoroughly detested in Russia; he was deposed on his return and a Russian was elected in his place. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was regarded by the Russians as the divine punishment of Greeks for their betrayal of Orthodoxy. A theory spread in Russia, propounded by a monk Philoteus of Pskov, that the first Rome fell away from the true Church by heresy, Byzantium was captured by the infidels for the same reason, and Moscow was the third and last Rome, the true centre of Christendom. If Moscow is the third Rome its ruler must be an Emperor, a Tsar, successor to the Emperors of the East. The marriage of the Grand Duke Ivan III to Sophia Paleologos, niece of the last Emperor of Constantinople, gave the rulers of Moscow a pretext for taking the Byzantine coat-of-arms, code of etiquette, etc. Ivan IV formally took the title of Tsar in 1547 and this innovation received the sanction of the Patriarch of Constantinople.

These events completely changed the relations between Church and State in Russia. Instead of the shadowy Grand Duke, barely recognized by the numerous secondary princes, there arose a powerful Tsar, ruling the enormous State with the help of the former princes, now reduced to the rank of simple noblemen. The Primate was no longer a cultured and refined Greek, but a native, subject to the Tsar, appointed according to his wish by a Council, and deposed likewise, if this was desired. Ivan III, Vassili, his son, and Ivan the Terrible did not hesitate to depose the unwelcome prelates.

In fact, the enormous power of the Church was a challenge to the growing Tsardom, which began gradually to curtail it. The numerous exemptions and privileges granted by the former Sovereigns were revoked, further increase of the landed estates of the Church was prevented, and an effort was even made to deprive the monasteries of part of their possessions. This premature attempt was defeated by churchmen, but not without a struggle. Within the Church itself there existed a powerful party, which protested against the wealth of monasteries as a betrayal of the evangelical ideal, and denounced the political activity of the Church. This party was headed by St. Nilus of Sora. His chief opponent was St. Joseph of Volokolamsk. Their controversy is the Eastern counterpart of that of Cluny and Cîteaux, Mabillon and de Rancé.

In the end the partisans of St. Nilus were defeated, as they advocated also religious toleration and so were accused of being secret sympathizers with the powerful sect of "Judaizers," which, starting from Novgorod, spread over Russia in the fifteenth century and was *au fond* the first appearance of Russian rationalism and freethought. The heresy was spread by Jews and practised a number of Jewish rites. Though practically independent of Constantinople since 1440, the Russian Church was still nominally under it until 1589, when the Metropolitan of Moscow, Job, was made the Patriarch of all Russia with the consent of the Eastern Patriarchs. So at last, at the very end of the House of Rurik, Russia became the exact reproduction of Byzantium, in that it had both Emperor and Patriarch.

The first Patriarch was a quiet and submissive man

and had no influence. It was quite different with his successors: Hermogen and Philaret. The end of the House of Rurik, which had ruled over Russia for seven centuries, was followed by a long period of civil discord, wars, and foreign invasion. The Patriarch Hermogen ruled the Russian Church during this period of troubles, which ended in the election of Michael Romanov to the throne of Russia in 1613. For a few years the Patriarch was a real leader of the Russian people in its struggle with Poles and Swedes, who invaded the country. Under his influence a nationalist revival led by Kosma Minin, a merchant from Volga, began, culminating in the expulsion of the foreign invaders from Russia. The Patriarch himself died at the hands of the foreign invaders. His behaviour during the troubles and his death did much to raise the prestige of the Patriarchal throne in the eyes of the nation.

Hermogen was succeeded by the Metropolitan Philaret of Rostov, father of the first Romanov, formerly a statesman. For several years Philaret ruled the Church and the State for his young son, and all State documents were written in the name of both. In 1652, Nikon, Metropolitan of Novgorod, was elected Patriarch. An administrative genius, a man of an iron will, an able statesman, he was too strong for the pious and submissive Tsar Alexis, his friend. Nikon, with his ideas on the pre-eminence of the priesthood over the kingship, his burning zeal for reforms, his hostility to the nobility, was inevitably forced into a long struggle with the civil power. Like Gregory VII or Becket in the West, he fell, but not without changing the whole course of Russian

history. His liturgical reforms, hastily and unwisely pressed upon the ignorant and superstitious masses, produced a great schism in the Russian Church. Many conservative and intensely proud churchmen were offended by the efforts of the Patriarch to change the venerable Russian rites in order to bring them closer to those of the Greeks, whom the Russians regarded with the deepest suspicion since the Council of Florence. Many influential priests and laymen, and even one bishop, Paul of Kolomna, refused to accept the liturgical reforms and separated themselves from the Church in 1667, founding Russian Nonconformity, which rapidly subdivided into numerous sects. The Old Believers rejected the Nikonian reforms and professed that the Antichrist ruled in the Orthodox Church and in all other churches which do not observe the old rites. As no bishop went over to them they were soon in a difficulty about new priests. The conservative Old Believers retained their existing priests and recruited new ones from the clergy of the Orthodox Church who were willing to come over. The radical wing rejected the priesthood altogether as well as all sacraments but baptism. The protopriest Avvakum was their leader. The priestless Old Believers were soon subdivided into many sects, mystical and rationalist. The struggle in the Church enabled the State to crush Nikon and to prepare the way for a subjugation of the Church, weakened by the departure of so many resolute men into the ranks of Nonconformity.

Besides millions who left the Russian Church with the Old Believers, it lost also heavily in the West. Since 1440 the administrative unity of the Russian

Church was broken. One Primate, in Moscow, ruled the Russian eastern dioceses and another, in Kiev, administered the Russian dioceses in the kingdoms of Poland and Hungary. This Primate remained under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople. In 1596, at Brest, some Western Russian bishops, yielding to the able diplomacy of the Polish Jesuits, signed the document of union with the See of Rome, starting in this way the Russian Uniate Church, which still exists in Galicia and has millions of adherents.

Peter the Great, son of the Tsar Alexis, a great reformer, was a Protestant in his sympathies, perhaps even a freethinker. His bold and radical reforms in every department of Russian life excited the deepest hostility against him not only from the Old Believers but from the Orthodox Churchmen as well. To destroy any possibility of the Church and the conservatives combining against his reforms Peter the Great decided to subject the Church to control of the State even in minute details. When the Patriarch Adrian died in 1700 Peter appointed the Metropolitan Stephen Yavorski to be the *locum tenens* of the Patriarchal throne. The "Monastery Office," set up after the defeat of the Church in the previous reigns, was to look after Church endowments. Gradually and systematically Peter subjected the Church to numerous restrictions until the way was clear to abolish the Patriarchate altogether and to set up a spiritual college, otherwise the Most Holy Synod, to rule the Russian Church. This Synod was created by an Imperial decree in 1721, without consulting the Church authorities. The members of the Synod, bishops and priests, were appointed by the Emperor and removed by him at his discretion. All

members of the Synod swore to accept the Emperor as its supreme judge. Indeed, the Emperor was in a sense its president, though he never attended the meetings of the Synod. He was represented there by a lay dignitary, the Chief Procurator, who controlled all the business of the Synod in the interests of the State. No synodal decree was valid without his confirmation. All memoranda and minutes for the Synod were prepared by him, and the members did not even know the programme of the meeting before they came to it. The Chief Procurator controlled all diocesan bishops through his delegates in the dioceses, so-called consistorial secretaries. A bishop could not even leave his diocese without special permission from the Synod. In short, Peter reorganized the Russian Church on the pattern of the State Lutheran Churches of Sweden and Prussia. It must be admitted he did not interfere with the dogmatic teaching of the Church or with its rites. He just made it a department of the Civil Service to carry out his reforms in some particular field.

After the death of Peter in 1725 a few bishops, particularly the Metropolitan Arsenius of Rostov, under Catherine II tried to oppose the growing subordination of the Church to the State, but without much success. Catherine II confiscated most of the monastic estates in 1764 and, as in England, they became the foundation of the great territorial wealth of certain noble families. A number of monasteries were closed and the remainder severely restricted. Each monastery and convent was allowed to retain only a definite number of members and to enjoy an appropriate income. No one could take life vows

without the permission of the Synod. Under Alexander I (1801-1825) the Synod was for a long time a mere department of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction.

The secularization of the Russian Church was apparently complete. Its chief organ was a State department, its bishops and clergy merely civil servants, its monasteries State institutions. Nevertheless this secularization was only superficial. As formerly, great saints appeared in the Russian Church, new monasteries were illegally founded, great theologians arose, and an extensive missionary work was carried on in Siberia, Turkestan, Caucasus and China. Some millions of Uniates in the former Polish provinces annexed by Russia were reconciled to the Orthodox Church in 1839. A number of Old Believers were reconciled as far back as 1801. They were permitted to have their own clergy and to use the old liturgical books. The education of clergy was vastly improved. In 1824 the Synod was re-established in its former position and the Chief Procurator became a Cabinet Minister with great power. The State started to use the Church as a means to support the régime. The more the revolutionary movement increased the more the Government cared for the Church. Professor K. P. Pobedonostsev, who was the Chief Procurator from 1880 until 1905, did everything to keep the Imperial régime intact. The great prelates were State nominees and did everything in their power to stem the advance of the Revolution. The clergy, monks, and parochial schools were pressed into the defence of the régime against the wish of many Churchmen. The great disorders in seminaries and the troubles among the

secular clergy in 1905 testified how deep was the opposition of many Churchmen to State control of the Church.

After the troubles of 1905-1907 there was some talk of convening an All-Russian Church Council to restore the canonical position of the Church, to reform abuses and to promote education, etc. Nothing came out of this. The State was too much interested in using the Church against the Revolution. So on the eve of the Revolution the Russian Church had many members, wealthy and influential, but was under rigid State control and lacked leaders, except, perhaps, two prelates, who had a great influence on subsequent Church history: Archbishop Anthony of Kharkov, protagonist of the old régime, and Archbishop Sergius, of Finland, who hoped to achieve a *modus vivendi* with the Revolution. Besides the Russian Orthodox Church Russian Christianity on the eve of the Revolution was represented by the Old Believers and the Evangelicals, as well as by many smaller sects. How numerous these sects really were it is difficult to say. The Russian State estimated them at 2 millions in 1900, but independent and reliable authorities think that at that time the Old Believers alone were close on 20 millions. The truth is somewhere between. Anyhow, on the eve of the Revolution the number of the Nonconformists had reached 20 to 25 millions, thanks to the law of religious toleration published at the beginning of the century.

The Old Believers of the priestly persuasion possessed their own episcopacy with a Metropolitan and several bishops. Though the Russian Church refused to recognize their orders Rome found them valid. The

priestless Old Believers were at least twice as numerous as the other branch. They were largely drawn from the Cossacks and the peasants of Siberia, Southern Russia, and the Arctic littoral, but included merchants of Moscow and the Volga. The Evangelicals were, perhaps, more than one million strong. They were of Western origin and were divided into Baptists and Evangelical Christians. Well organized, endowed with a proselytizing spirit, they made numerous converts among the Russian lower middle class and workmen, particularly those belonging to the numerous Russian native sects, other than the Old Believers. These extremist sects included Molocans, Dukhobors, Skoptzi, Khlysti, etc. Some of them were rationalist and akin to the Western Unitarians, others were similar to Quakers and other mystical sects of the West. Russian Nonconformity, particularly the Evangelicals, and extremists played a great rôle in the struggle between the Church and the State in the Revolution, which they generally welcomed. For two hundred years they were much persecuted by the Imperial Government, which desired to control the religious life of the people, using for that end the Orthodox Church. Every effort was made to force them to return to Orthodoxy. Their priests and pastors were imprisoned or deported to Siberia, their chapels closed, their books destroyed, their children frequently and forcibly educated in Orthodoxy. Political oppression failed to curb or destroy these Free Church men; it succeeded only in making them hate Orthodoxy and the State. Like other persecuted elements of society, the Russian Nonconformists were grave, sober, industrious, and many of them well off and literate.

The great Russian merchant families belonged usually to the Old Believers or to the native sectarians. On the other hand, the Evangelical sects were strong among the lower middle class, which produced so many revolutionary leaders. This explains in part their hatred of the Orthodox Church. The Uniate branch of Russian Christianity did not exist in the Empire, except for a few scattered groups. Its stronghold was Galicia and Carpathian Russia, which were provinces of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Besides 20 to 25 millions of Russian Nonconformists, the Russian Empire possessed several million Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Armenians; but as they were not of the Russian stock they cannot be considered under the title of Russian Christianity. The Roman Catholics in Russia were chiefly Poles and Lithuanians; the Lutherans—Finns, Germans, Estonians and Latvians.

CHAPTER II

THE SOVIET REVOLUTION

IN the early March of 1917 the Russian monarchy, over 1,000 years old, fell to the ground. The causes of this fall were numerous and varied. The chief reason was probably its inability to adjust itself to modern conditions. Russia, like Japan, China, Turkey, Iran and Abyssinia, laboured under the difficulty of adjusting herself quickly to conditions imposed upon her by the outside world. The Russian State was founded later than the States of Western Europe, and its development was much delayed by the Mongol domination. Russia did not pass through feudalism in the Western sense of the word, Renaissance or Reformation. It left Europe, except for its northern and western principalities, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, a century so brilliant in the West, and became a province of an Asiatic empire with quite different traditions and culture. When Russia became again a great and powerful State under Ivan III, the West had so advanced in general prosperity, culture and civilization that Russia was forced to strain all her forces to catch up. The powerful Polish and Swedish kingdoms on the west and the Ottoman Empire in the south continually encroached upon Russian territory and even threatened to dismember the country. All these States were far better organized, educated and armed than sparsely populated Russia, still suffering from

the aftermath of the Mongolian rule. In order to survive, the Moscow Government was obliged to make the free Russian peasants into serfs to enable the nobility to devote all their time to civil and military service to the State. It was obliged also to tax merchants heavily and to make continual inroads on the wealth of the Church. In this way the Tsars were able to defend their dominion and to extend its boundaries in the East, into Asia.

Nevertheless, man-power and money were insufficient for successful wars. Russia badly needed trained soldiers, engineers, architects, and specialists of every kind. The natives were far too primitive and ignorant to oppose the Western foes with any hope of success. So Italian architects built the Moscow Kremlin, German and Swedish engineers erected fortresses, Scots trained Russian soldiers and travelled as diplomats of the Tsar. This process of foreign infiltration into Russia, which began in the fifteenth century, gradually gained momentum, particularly in the seventeenth century, when it became obvious that Russia might become a Polish or Swedish dominion and lose its independence unless quickly and thoroughly reformed and westernized. Peter the Great westernized Russia to a very great degree during the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The native Russian administration and the organization of the armed forces were abandoned in favour of the Western patterns. The Church was subjugated to the State, the old aristocracy curbed and a new nobility, obedient to the Tsar, created in its place. Education was thoroughly westernized and the first seeds of Russian industry sown. The sweeping and far-reaching re-

forms of Peter the Great enabled Russia not only to overcome Poland, Sweden and Turkey, but to become a major European power.

The price of this achievement was, however, great. The whole fabric of Russian society was unsettled. The peasants, made serfs and outraged by the attacks of Peter the Great on the Church, were discontented and uneasy. The merchants, crushed by the enormous taxation, were hostile to the State, though silent. The old nobility sighed after its former freedom and looked with envy on the proud liberties of Polish, Hungarian, English and Swedish noblemen. The Church, though silent and submissive, was never reconciled to the place assigned to it by Peter the Great. Except by the new nobility and bureaucracy, created by Peter, the reformed State was hated everywhere. However, it survived for two centuries, built the wonderful city of St. Petersburg as its capital, and created the colossal Russian Empire, embracing about 23 per cent. of the whole land surface of the globe. It survived because its opponents were disorganized and lacked any alternative programme. It survived also because of its iron dictatorship, efficient bureaucracy, high degree of centralization and clear ideology. The Tsar was an Anointed of God, who entrusted to him the Russian people to rule over and to whom alone the Tsar was responsible. In practice the Russian Tsars of the eighteenth century ruled not so much for the well-being of the nation as a whole but for the benefit of the nobility, who were exempted from all obligatory services by Peter III and Catherine II, but left to possess and exploit serfs as formerly. Very quickly the Russian nobility ceased to resemble

English squires, and became like the idle and pompous French nobles before the Revolution. The masses, deeply displeased by this development, expressed their anger in many rebellions, the most important of which was that of Pugachev in the middle of the eighteenth century. Not only the illiterate peasants but many even of the nobles were discontented at the evolution of the Russian State. After Peter the Great nobles continually travelled to the West, where they found countries much better administered, more prosperous and free than Russia. Returning home, they began to criticize the Government generally, and Russian ideas, customs, and manners.

In this way the Russian Revolution was prepared. Sown in the narrow circles of the brilliant Court of Catherine II in the eighteenth century by the French encyclopædists and their Russian admirers, it reached the Army in the following reigns. Already in 1825 there was a military rebellion in St. Petersburg led by officers, who desired to limit the powers of the Russian Tsardom and to turn Russia into a liberal and constitutional monarchy of the English type. This rebellion was crushed and the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855) witnessed a desperate struggle of the Government against the time, which demanded many radical and immediate reforms. Alexander II, who succeeded Nicholas I, effected several reforms in administration, the law courts, and the Army. He also freed the serfs and promoted popular education. He even intended to give Russia a liberal constitution. His assassination in 1881 deprived Russia of the expected constitution and restored almost completely the oppressive régime of Nicholas I. Every effort was

made to stem the advance of the Revolution. The Church was pressed to defend the régime, schools were suitably reformed, the privileges of nobility upheld and the favour of the growing Russian bourgeoisie was sought. All was in vain. The serfs, freed but possessing little land, soon developed land hunger and looked with envy and hatred upon the nobles and merchants and the Church, who possessed great and fertile estates. The new factory workers, terribly exploited by the rapacious Russian bourgeoisie, willingly listened to the revolutionary agitators. The growing discontent was serious and deep and it needed only leaders to produce an explosion.

The Russian intelligentsia provided these leaders. Already in the reign of Nicholas I, higher and secondary education was extended over Russia in such a way that not only the nobles but the children of the clergy, merchants, civil servants, officers and professional men could benefit by it. This education put many young Russians into contact with German philosophy and French utopian socialism, the combination of which produced the Russian Populist Movement aiming to establish a democratic régime in Russia. The Populists hated the Tsardom and cared little for the Church. They were generally freethinkers. Some of them, like Belinsky (1810-1848) and Herzen (1812-1870), were good writers and gifted men. Gradually the Populists split up into Socialist Revolutionaries and Liberals. The first group sought to destroy Tsardom by a popular uprising and favoured individual and mass terrorism. During many decades they assassinated grand dukes, princes, governors, generals, ministers, even bishops and priests, in order to produce disloca-

tion of the administrative body and promote the popular movements. They favoured the confiscation of private and Church estates in order to distribute them among the peasants. They hoped for a peasant, democratic, and lower-middle-class State. They were against the Church as the support of the Imperial régime but not otherwise. The Liberals, who became the Popular Democratic Party, hoped to establish in Russia a bourgeois republic like that of France or, failing that, a constitutional monarchy as in England.

Under the iron hand of Alexander III peace, progress and prosperity seemed to reign in Russia. However, it was only an illusion. In 1894 Nicholas II, the last Tsar, mounted the throne. His reign began with the awful disaster of Khodynka, where several thousands of people were killed during the coronation festivities because of the inefficiency of the police. Nicholas II disappointed the Liberals, refusing to grant a Constitution, which they expected. The disastrous Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5 demonstrated clearly that the Russian State needed radical reforms if it was to survive. The Army, Navy, Civil Service, education, industrial and social legislation, all alike were found to be inadequate and corrupt. The general discontent produced the Russian Revolutionary Movement, which lasted from 1905 until 1907. In October, 1905, Nicholas II granted Russia a moderately democratic constitution, which possessed, however, one distinct blemish: the Government was responsible not to the newly created Parliament, consisting of two chambers, but to the Emperor alone. The Parliament had, however, power to vote the Budget. The first and second State Dumas (Russian House of Commons),

elected on a very wide franchise, were unable to co-operate with the Imperial bureaucracy and were both dissolved. The third Duma, elected on a much narrower franchise, succeeded in staying its full term. A. P. Stolypin, the last great Imperial statesman and Prime Minister, undertook a whole series of radical agrarian reforms, which nearly warded off the Revolution. Perceiving that no revolution in Russia was possible unless supported by the peasants, Stolypin conceived a clever plan to reconcile them with the régime and to turn Russia into a monarchy based on the peasants. His plan was to turn the peasants into prosperous individual farmers by breaking the communal land holding common in Russia. His assassination in 1910 by the revolutionary terrorists sounded the death-knell of the Empire.

Stolypin was succeeded by dull and unimaginative bureaucrats and the Court became dominated by Gregory Rasputin, a highly gifted but unprincipled man. A peasant from Siberia, he made a great reputation as healer and seer. Some prelates, charmed by him, introduced him to the Court and to the Empress, prostrate with grief over her only son, who was incurably ill with hæmophilia. No doctor could heal him, but Rasputin succeeded temporarily, for in his presence no attack occurred. The Empress, mystical and romantic, immediately saw in Rasputin a prophet of God, sent to save Russia from revolution. His advice was sought after and no credence was placed in reports showing how double-faced Rasputin was. The Russo-German war, as formerly the Russo-Japanese one, revealed deep disorder in the Russian Army and Civil Service, inadequate industrialization,

and the absence of any consistent policy either at home or abroad. The Army was poorly equipped and provisioned, speculation at the base shocking, society in a decaying condition. Rasputin saw clearly that the Empire was doomed unless a separate peace with Germany was concluded immediately. No one would listen to such dishonourable proposals. In the late autumn of 1916 Rasputin was killed and a few months later the Revolution followed.

The grand dukes, ministers, generals, officers, clergy, and masses all abandoned the Emperor and his Government. After a few days of fighting in the streets of Petrograd the Empire fell and a Provisional Government, made up of Liberals and one Socialist, Alexander Kerenski, came into power. It was soon confronted with the problem of the general dissolution of society as a result of the war. The soldiers were demoralized by the terrific and apparently senseless slaughter of the three years of war. They craved for peace practically at any price, and cared little about the Western Allies. The peasants were preoccupied with their desire to seize the private and monastic estates and divide them among themselves. The workers looked for a Socialist State and the intelligentsia were busy with drawing up the new laws and programmes. The Liberals and the Socialists were afraid to use any compulsion against soldiers, peasants, and workers, and to be branded as reactionaries. Chaos and disorder were rampant.

At this point the Bolsheviks appeared on the stage. They were the Russian Marxists, who had organized themselves into a Russian Social Democratic Party as far back as 1898. This party split into two at

the London Congress of 1903—Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, headed by Lenin and Martov respectively. The Mensheviks were mechanists in their philosophy, parliamentary democrats in politics, and evolutionists in economics. They favoured the gradual transformation of the capitalist society into a classless one. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, professed dialectical materialism, which is really pantheism, very similar to the so-called doctrine of emergent evolution. The Bolsheviks held that man is much more than a physico-chemical compound and, therefore, he is not merely a passive agent in the developing economic process. The Bolsheviks believed that man can, by his exertions, alter economic evolution and bring about the classless society through violent revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Lenin soon understood how favourable the Russian situation of 1917 was for his dreams of establishing a Communist State. His adversaries were divided between themselves, their parties were huge and amorphous. They lacked any precise and clear ideology. Worse still, they did not sense the realities of the situation. Lenin, on the other hand, realized at once that two promises would gain for him the support of countless millions and make him the master of Russia. He promised the tired and discontented peasant masses at the front and at home immediate peace and division of the land. His adversaries still talked about victory in the war, fidelity to the Allies, orderly transfer of properties from one social group to another, etc. Lenin promised everything at once and won. On November 7, 1917, Lenin became the Dictator of Russia. The Provisional Government were

arrested and imprisoned. The Soviet Government, elected by the All-Russian Assembly of the Soviets of workmen, soldiers, and peasants, came into being. The Government was under the guidance of the Bolshevik party and immediately started to turn Russia into a Communist State. The banks, factories, large shops, landed estates, industrial and commercial undertakings of any importance were nationalized. The landed estates were given to the peasants to divide among themselves. Separate peace negotiations with the Germans were immediately opened, which culminated in the onerous Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, by which Russia lost many provinces and paid a large indemnity.

Occupied with many pressing needs, the Bolsheviks did not strike the Church before the decree of January 23, 1918, which opened a long and painful period of Russian Church history. This decree not only separated the Church from the State, which was wanted by many Churchmen, though opposed by the majority; it also deprived the Church of corporate juridical rights, confiscated its bank deposits, landed estates, houses, and even church buildings, closed all theological academies and seminaries, took away the registration of births, marriages and deaths, and, finally, prohibited religious instruction in all schools. The decree proclaimed freedom of conscience and abolished all privileges of clergy and members of the established Church.

How did Churchmen meet the Revolution? It will be fair to admit that since 1905 there was in the Church a party which disliked the Tsardom and aspired to the ideals of a Free Church in a Free State. How numerous these were it is difficult to say,

but Liberals undoubtedly existed in the clergy. Many priests, such as Fathers Petrov (St. Petersburg), Anastasev (Kazan), Preobrajenski (Vladimir), Shapovalov (Kharkov) and others, actively supported the Revolutionary Movement and were removed from office. Many priests in the Dumas supported the advanced agrarian legislation. The lay Churchmen were still more advanced. But *en masse* the clergy and many laymen were solidly for the Imperial régime. Few tolerably radical reforms would have been acceptable to them. The overthrow of the Empire in March, 1917, revived the Church dissensions of 1905. The Union of Democratic Clergy was organized in Petrograd with the express aim of promoting the establishment of a Free Church in a Free State and of christianizing the workers. The Provisional Government suppressed the office of Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod for the more European-looking Minister of Cults. The Government deposed some bishops and dismissed a number of clergymen too closely connected with Rasputin. Otherwise it did not interfere with Church affairs. The Revolution certainly freed the Church. It was able to convoke the All-Russian Church Council, or Sobor, which was solemnly opened on August 15, 1917, by a service in the cathedral of the Assumption in the Moscow Kremlin, in the presence of Prime Minister Kerenski. This Sobor was formed of 569 delegates, elected from every diocese and from missions and monasteries according to a definite plan; 299 delegates were laymen and the remainder were clergy, including bishops. Dr. Julius Hecker, in his book *Religion and Communism*, states that the 299 lay delegates included 11 titled persons, 10 military

officers of high rank, 132 civil servants, 22 landowners, 69 members of the professional class, and the rest was made up of merchants, wealthy peasants, and shopkeepers. Ten metropolitans, 17 archbishops, 53 bishops, 15 archimandrites, 72 protopriests, etc., sat on the clerical side. All political currents were represented in the Sobor, from the frank monarchists, led by Archbishop Anthony of Kharkov, the greatest Russian prelate of the period, to the extreme left formed of professors of the theological academies. The balance of power belonged, however, to the centre, where two lay philosophers and professors, S. N. Bulgakov and E. N. Trubetzkoy, were most notable. Generally speaking, the Sobor members were anti-bolsheviks and became much more so after the decree which confiscated Church property, closed Church schools and deprived the Church of legal rights. The Soviet Revolution shortened the sittings of the Sobor, but it succeeded in giving the Russian Church a new and canonical constitution. The Sobor restored the Patriarchate, abolished by Peter the Great in 1721, affirmed the conciliar basis of the Russian Church and organized a rather democratic diocesan and parochial administration.

On November 18, 1917, during the fighting in the streets of Moscow, the Sobor elected as the first holder of the restored Patriarchate Tikhon Belavin, Metropolitan of Moscow, a meek and unassuming prelate of liberal sympathies. The fiery Archbishop Anthony of Kharkov, who received the large majority of votes, was not elected because he failed to pass the second ballot. The Staretz Alexis chose the Metropolitan of Moscow from among three different lots. The cruelty

of the Bolsheviks, the confiscation of the Church estates, and the closing of schools made Churchmen violently antibolshevik. The Patriarch Tikhon expressed their views in his first pastoral letter to the Church, where he condemned the Bolsheviks severely, branded them as the monsters of the human race, excommunicated them, and appealed to the people to support the Church.

This message opened the struggle between the Russian Church and the Bolsheviks. Preoccupied with the civil war, which raged from 1917 up to 1921, the Bolsheviks did not reply at once to the Patriarch. They bided their time. At the beginning, therefore, the Bolsheviks did not interfere seriously with the Church, except for confiscating its bank fund, estimated to exceed 300 million pounds, and its landed estates of 19 million acres.* The attempt to requisition the Alexander Nevsky Lavra in Petrograd in January, 1918, produced such strong popular discontent that the Bolsheviks were obliged to give up for a time similar efforts to seize the monasteries. The civil war, with its carnage and general demoralization, helped the Bolsheviks a good deal in their struggle with the Church. It must be admitted that many bishops, clergy and Churchmen welcomed the White Armies, the armed coalition of many disparate groups opposed to the Bolsheviks. This support of the Whites by many Churchmen gave the Bolsheviks the right and a pretext to declare Churchmen enemies of the proletariat and the Church an alien institution and hostile to the Soviet State. According to the findings of General

* Hecker, *Religion and Communism*, p. 194. How far these figures correspond to the reality it is difficult to say.

Denikin's Commission,* 28 bishops and 1,215 priests were shot during the years 1918-19. If it is difficult to prove these figures to complete satisfaction, it is, nevertheless, clear that frightful atrocities were committed against the clergy during the civil war. During the civil war many churches were closed, chapels destroyed, and charitable funds secularized. 637 monasteries, out of 1,026, were liquidated before 1921. The printing of theological books became impossible. Many old Church libraries were closed, but one theological institute still survived in Petrograd.

The famine of 1921 provided a test of strength between the Church and the Bolsheviks, who decreed in February, 1922, the seizure of the sacred vessels and reliquaries of the Church in order to buy bread for the starving population of the Volga provinces. The Patriarch Tikhon in his message to the Church dated February 28, 1922, forbade the clergy to deliver to the State any sacred objects, used only for worship, and nothing else, according to the canons. The Bolsheviks, nevertheless, ordered their seizure throughout Russia. Bloody incidents followed in many places. The seized property was not very large. Dr. Hecker states in his book (p. 209) that there were 442 kg. of gold; 336,227 kg. of silver; other metals, 1,345 kg. Besides, there were 33,456 diamonds, but of little value, 4,414 grs. of pearls, etc. Thousands of bishops, priests, monks, laymen were arrested for resistance to the State and tried in public; a great many were shot, including the venerable Metropolitan Benjamin of Petrograd. The Roman Catholics suffered

* Quoted by G. P. Fedotoff in *The Russian Church since the Revolution* (S.P.C.K., London, 1928, p. 33).

also on the same account and lost Mgr. Butkevich and several priests. The Patriarch Tikhon was arrested himself. This arrest led to divisions in the Russian Church and to its further weakening. Two Petrograd priests, Vedensky and Belkov, imbued with the idea of reconciling Communism with Christianity, decided that the time was opportune to reform the Orthodox Church in the right direction. They came to Moscow, where they were joined by two like-minded Churchmen: Bishop Antonin and priest Krasnitzki. On May 12 they visited the Patriarch in prison and declared him guilty in respect of the recent executions and troubles. They succeeded in obtaining from the Patriarch a letter, transferring the administration of the Church temporarily to the Metropolitan Agathangel of Yaroslavl. Armed with this document, the radical priests declared that the Patriarch had abdicated his see and transferred his authority to the Higher Church Administration to be formed. They invited the Metropolitan of Yaroslavl to join them. As he refused he was exiled to Siberia by the Bolsheviks, eager to destroy the Russian Church from within. As almost all bishops were arrested the radical priests were free to try to reform the Church. As they all had their own tastes they formed at once many groups: Living Church, Renovated Church, Ancient Apostolic Church, etc. They all tried, but in vain, to reconcile Christianity with Marxism, somehow or other.

Within a few years all these groups were absorbed into the Renovated Church, which, still existing as a small minority, does not differ from traditional Orthodoxy in its dogmatic or sacramental teaching. All its innovations are purely liturgical or canonical. The

liturgy is simplified and the vernacular is introduced into it. Priests are allowed to marry the second time and married bishops are accepted. The suppression of monasticism was merely recommended. Thanks to the support of the Soviet authorities, the Renovators were able to organize a Sobor in Moscow in 1923. This Sobor proclaimed capitalism to be a deadly sin and a struggle against it the sacred duty of every Christian. Further, it recognized the Soviet Government as the only régime in the world which sincerely tries to reorganize the whole of mankind according to the ideals of the Kingdom of God. The Sobor called, consequently, upon all Churchmen to be loyal to the régime, condemned struggle against it as unchristian, repealed the anathematizing of the Soviet Government by the Patriarch Tikhon, deposed him and reduced him to the status of layman. The Patriarch, of course, rejected the acts of the Sobor as invalid and in order to regain the freedom to face the rebellion in the Church itself signed on June 16, 1923, a most humiliating document, in which he not only repealed his former anathematizing of the Soviet but recognized himself guilty before it and requested his freedom, with repentance and promise of future loyalty. The Bolsheviks set him free at once.

Their triumph over the Church as an organization was great. They had split it into the two hostile factions, both anxious to gain Government favours and pledged to unquestioning loyalty to it.

CHAPTER III

THE GODLESS MOVEMENT

THE Renovators, in order to gain the favours of the Soviets, tried hard to reconcile Christianity and Bolshevism and elaborated a peculiar ideology, which they called religious Leninism. Their efforts failed miserably and their whole movement pitifully collapsed within a few years. The chief reason for this collapse was the realization of the fact that it is impossible to reconcile Bolshevism with any form of organized religion. It would be long and tedious to describe fully the philosophical doctrine of Marxism. It is a peculiar mixture, in which some things are taken from Spinoza, others from Hegel, Feuerbach, Mole-shott, etc.

There are two schools of Marxists. The mechanists stand for the mechanical explanation of life; they deny any world purpose, look upon man as a chemico-physical compound motivated by the appropriate reactions, view history as an impersonal process, in which human society gradually changes under the pressure of its environment. They understand matter in terms of the abandoned atomic theory. The other school, the dialecticians, are really pantheists, though they deny the charge vehemently. According to them matter is something eternal and uncreated, endowed with movement, which urges it to build continually higher forms of life. It is the philosophy

of emergent evolution. Life cannot be explained by mechanical laws only and man is not merely a robot. He may interfere with the laws of nature and society and lead evolution instead of being led by it. The Hegelian dialectic is then brought into play and cleverly used to explain away any unwelcome event or thing. Scientifically, dialectical materialism is weak. It has no support from the scientists even in the Soviet Union itself. Philosophically it is full of contradictions and inconsistencies. But it is an optimistic and humanitarian creed, very crude and naive, but admirably suited to the level of the unthinking and poorly educated masses. According to the Marxists human history is fully explained by economic processes. Civilization—the State, religion, art, even science—is nothing more than the superstructure, reflecting the economic realities and the class struggle.

Religion, therefore, according to Marxists, is a product of a society where the class struggle goes on. It is a degrading superstition because, recognizing the existence of Almighty God and His Providence and teaching man to trust Him and be resigned to his lot, it lends itself easily to use by the exploiters in their struggle with the toilers. Christianity, with its veneration of humility, meekness and obedience, is particularly obnoxious. In history it has been usually associated with oppressors: feudal barons, crusaders, aristocrats, capitalists. Only in its early beginning in the Roman Empire was it a proletarian movement. The exploiters use Christianity as an opiate for the people, promising to the workers every reward in the future life and robbing them of everything here. Yaro-

slavsky, the well-known Bolshevik leader and atheist, in his booklet *Religion in the U.S.S.R.*,* states this view quite clearly: “*If the world is controlled by God, if the fate of the people is in the hands of God, His saints, angels, devils and fiends—then what sense is there in the organized struggle of the workers and peasants, in the creation of a Leninist Party? What sense is there in the Socialist reconstruction of society?*” All this could be destroyed by a mere wave of the ‘almighty’ hand of God—who, happily, exists only in the imagination of believers—nowhere else! The conception of the world from the religious viewpoint is incorrect; it is a mutilated understanding of the world and of the mutual relationships of men. A person cannot act correctly, cannot act in an organized manner as a Communist, as a Leninist, if his brain is poisoned by religion. In order to overcome the tremendous difficulties which confront us; in order to remould the world as the working class and the peasantry want it to be; in order to subjugate all the forces of nature and compel them to work for the welfare of mankind; in order to change social relations from top to bottom; in order to eradicate war between nations, to exterminate poverty from the face of the earth—it is necessary *that every person, that every peasant and worker sees things as they are, without the intervention of gods* [italics in original], saints, angels, fiends, goblins, were-wolves, and other spirits, good or evil. Religion acts as a bandage over the eyes of man, preventing him from seeing the world as it is. It is our task to tear off this bandage and to teach the masses of workers and peasants to see things correctly, to understand what does exist and what does not, so as to be able to

* Modern Books, Ltd., London, 1932.

rebuild this world to fit the needs of the workers and peasants. We must, therefore, convince the masses that Communism and religion cannot go together, that it is not possible to be a Communist and at the same time believe in devils or gods, in heavenly creatures, in the Virgin Mary, in the saints, in pious princes and princesses, bishops and landowners, who have been canonized by the priests. It is impossible to be a Communist-Leninist and at the same time to go to church, listen to the lies of the priests and take part in the performance of religious rites—that is, give support to the religious hocus-pocus that says that if you move your hands this way or that, cross yourself two or three times, bow, say this or that prayer, turn around to face one corner and then another, and think of the non-existent gods and saints, some changes will be brought about in the life of man. It is impossible to be a Communist, a Leninist, and retain the belief that the conditions of life, of society, of industry, the weather or an individual's health, can be influenced by prayers, by sprinkling 'holy water,' by burning incense, or by performing any other superstitious rites" (pp. 28-29).

Yaroslavsky's ideology is expressed in article 13 of the Bolshevik Party programme, where the following sentences are found: "The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is guided by the conviction that only conscious and deliberate planning of all the social and economic activities of the masses will cause religious prejudices to die out. The Party strives for the complete dissolution of the ties between the exploiting classes and the organizations of religious propaganda, facilitates the real emancipation of the working masses from

religious prejudices, and organizes the widest possible scientific, educational and antireligious propaganda. At the same time it is necessary carefully to avoid giving offence to the religious sentiments of believers, which only leads to the strengthening of religious fanaticism" (*ibid.*, pp. 17-18).

To anyone who has studied Marxism, and particularly its Leninist variety, it is clear that religion is irreconcilable with it. One may be a Christian or a Leninist. He who believes he may profess both creeds deceives himself. He will be neither Marxist nor Christian. The late Pope Pius XI in his encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno" understood that perfectly.

The victory over the Russian Orthodox Church in 1923 stimulated the Bolsheviks to new efforts to destroy it. The Twelfth Congress of the Bolshevik Party, convened the same year, decided to organize a systematic antireligious propaganda in order to prevent the weakened and divided Churchmen from regaining lost ground. This propaganda was first organized by the publication of two "godless" papers for wide circulation: *Bezbojnik* and *Bezbojnik u Stanka*. Two years later the Union of Militant Godless was founded. This Union had two distinct aims: first to disclose the class nature of religion as a tool by which the exploiters could oppress the workers; secondly to propound the Communist philosophy of life. The first efforts of the Union were directed chiefly to public controversies with priests and pastors at specially organized meetings. This method was soon abandoned, as it was found that the defenders of religion were able pretty often to silence the Godless with logical and scientific arguments, showing how

shallow and contradictory Leninism was in itself. Such a defeat could not be tolerated, and the Godless concentrated their efforts after 1927 on organized systematic propaganda in the press, schools, Red Army, factories, offices, libraries, and villages. Special lectures, antireligious museums, plays, films, carnivals, all ridiculing religion, were promoted and supported. Every effort was made to induce as many workers as possible to join the Union and to give up religion. Numerous privileges were promised, directly or indirectly, to those who abandoned superstition for the right doctrine. The Union began to grow. It had but 2,421 cells, with 87,033 members, in 1926, but 8,928 cells, with 465,498 members, two years later. In 1930 it had increased tremendously. There were then 35,000 cells, with 2,000,000 members. The Godless, dissatisfied with lectures, museums and processions, demanded straightforward police restrictions against Churchmen, insinuating that they were suspicious elements. The deportation of clergy and the closing down of churches became common. In 1928 the Bolsheviks closed 592 churches, and that figure was largely exceeded the next year.

The years of the collectivization drive were the golden time of the Godless Union. Under the pretext that the churches were the strongholds of the kulaks, or well-to-do farmers, literally thousands of them were closed within a few years. Whole provinces remained without a single church or priest. The year 1929 dealt also a serious blow to the Russian Evangelicals. Oppressed under the Empire, the Evangelicals generally welcomed the Soviet Revolution, and the Bolsheviks were very careful at first not to offend them. The

sectarians supported them, and, besides, they were very useful in weakening the Orthodox Church, to which 75 per cent. of the population belonged. The Evangelicals were given facilities to organize meetings, to travel widely and to publish books. Well trained, aggressive, liberally supplied with American money, the Evangelicals were able to develop widespread propaganda, so that they had 3,000 registered communities in 1933, with several millions of communicants.

The Evangelical Movement made a strong appeal to many workers and became a dangerous competitor of the party. To stop it the Bolsheviks amended their Constitution by a decree of April 8, 1929. The Amendment, while permitting Godless propaganda, made religious propaganda illegal, as it is still. Article 17 of the Amendment prohibited the religious associations from forming mutual-aid, co-operative and productive societies, rendering material aid to their members, organizing libraries, reading rooms, excursions, general Bible studies, literary, handiwork, industrial and other circles, special children's, youths' and women's meetings, etc. Article 19 restricted the clergymen's freedom of travelling. The Evangelicals began to decline quickly under these blows. The first five years' plan period was a time of strong revival of utopian Communism, which had been kept in check by Lenin's New Economic Policy, inaugurated in 1921 and representing a partial return to capitalism. The years 1929 and 1930 were the mad years of collectivization, industrial and social experiments of the most daring kind. The marriage and abortion regulations of this period, the policy of equal pay and the six-days

week, etc., all bear the mark of extreme utopianism. These things now belong to the dead past. The Godless drive accompanied this efflorescence of utopian Communism. In 1930 the circulation of *Bezbojnik* reached 100,000 copies instead of 63,000 in 1928. Its size was doubled. In May, 1932, the Godless Union numbered 80,000 cells, with 7,000,000 members, besides 1,500,000 Godless children.

The religious situation obtaining then in the Soviet Union is very well described in the letter of the late Pope Pius XI to Cardinal Pompili, dated February 2, 1930. His Holiness wrote: "Since Christmas not only have several churches been closed, ikons burned, workers and schoolchildren forced to take part in the campaign, and the Sabbath rest abolished, but the factory workers, men and women, have been compelled to sign declarations of apostasy and of hatred against God under penalty of losing their bread cards and food and shelter, without which in that unhappy country they can only die of famine, misery and cold. In all the towns and many villages, moreover, infamous carnivals have been organized, such as those witnessed by foreign diplomats at the height of the Christmas festival in Moscow itself. Lorries passed along with urchins decorated with sacred ornaments, who mocked the Cross and spat upon it. On other motor vehicles there were great Christmas trees with effigies of Catholic or Orthodox bishops hanging from the branches. In the centre of the town other young hooligans performed all kinds of sacrilege against the Cross."*

* Quoted from J. de Bivort de la Saudée, *Communism and Anti-religion*, Burns Oates and Washbourne, London, 1938, p. 35.

A few years later E. Yaroslavsky wrote in the American edition of *Religion in U.S.S.R.** on how to suppress religion in Russia altogether during the second five years' plan. The Godless leader suggested, it seems, five stages. First year: All religious schools to be closed and the first steps taken for the closing of churches in the capital. Second year: All persons professing any religion to be driven from the workshops and Government offices; all religious literature to be prohibited and 150 antireligious films to be produced, and shown throughout the Soviet Union, especially in the schools. Third year: This should be devoted to increasing the activity of the Godless cells and to the expulsion from the Soviet Union of all ecclesiastics, of whatever religion, who refuse to renounce their calling. Fourth year: All churches, chapels, and synagogues to be handed over to the local Soviet, to be turned into cinemas, clubs, or other places of intelligent pastime. Fifth year: To be devoted to the consolidation of ground gained on the antireligious front. By May 1, 1937, all expressions of religion should be swept from Soviet territory and the very notion of God erased from the popular mind. De la Saudée quotes this plan from *Britain Without God: An Exposure of Anti-godism*, by a London journalist,† but admits that the Bolsheviks always denied that such a plan ever existed officially. The circumstantial evidence, provided by articles and speeches of Yaroslavsky, the Godless press and Soviet radio, however, supports de la Saudée strongly.

* New York, International Publishers, 1934, p. 13, quoted by de la Saudée in his book, p. 36.

† Prefaced by Sir Thomas Inskip (Lutterworth Press, London, 1935, p. 35).

The Godless Movement, so vigorous in 1930, began to decline after 1932, first gradually and then rapidly. The Godless papers *Bezbojnik* and *Antireligiosnik* decreased alarmingly in size and circulation. *Bezbojnik* appeared in 1934 only thrice a month with four pages instead of eight pages. The review *Antireligiosnik*, which issued in 1931 31,000 copies monthly, with 128 pages each time, lost half of its size, became bi-monthly and retained only 12,000 subscribers in 1934. Since then the decline of the Godless Movement has never stopped, though every effort was made to revive it. This decline is closely related to the passing away of the generation which inspired the Movement. To the Old Bolsheviks, educated in the underworld of the Empire, the Church was the hated remnant of the former régime, which was to be destroyed. They hated it not only as Marxists, but as individuals as well, particularly if they were by origin not Orthodox but sectarians or Jews, who were in many ways restricted and kept down under the Empire. To the atheists, internationalists and professional rebels the Church was an abomination. It was quite different with the new Soviet generation. They had never known the Imperial régime and were free of any personal hatred towards it. They were but little interested in the World Revolution. Their aim was to build in Russia a Communist State for workers and peasants, free of any oppression of man by man. The young generation loved its native country passionately, and was interested in its history, art, literature, science. The Church was for them a relic of the past rather to be preserved than to be destroyed. The oppression of people for their religious convictions seemed to them unworthy

of the country of free men. These young men supported Stalin, who understood their aspirations and tried to lead their youth. The history of the Church now took a different course.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESENT POSITION

ALTHOUGH it would take too long to describe adequately the quarter of a century of Bolshevik rule over Russia, with its complicated and tragic history, nevertheless something must be said because otherwise the present position of the Christian Church in the U.S.S.R. cannot be understood. The Bolshevik rule is so closely connected now with the personality of Stalin that this extraordinary man, about whom numberless books have been written in many languages, must be studied.

A Georgian, born in 1879 of a very poor family in the Caucasus, Joseph Djugashvili studied for several years in different ecclesiastical schools, including five years in Tiflis Seminary, which he left in 1898. Except this schooling Stalin has no education. The story of how this candidate for the Orthodox priesthood became a revolutionary leader is interesting. It was stated in the first chapter that the Orthodox seminaries of the Empire, though giving a good intellectual education, lacked the spiritual and devotional atmosphere. Besides, many young men in them studied without any vocation for the priesthood simply because as sons of the clergy they received there a free secondary education. Many of them, indeed, never intended to take orders. This element, numerous and rebellious, made many seminaries the hotbeds of revolutionary agitation. A good many Russian revolutionaries came out of semin-

aries. The Tiflis Seminary was one of the worst in this respect in the whole of Russia. Disorders of every kind were rampant, and the discipline, consequently, was as severe as in any Army barracks, particularly after the assassination of the Very Rev. Rector by a student.

A member of a depressed nation, Stalin learned in Tiflis to hate the Empire, which in 1801 had incorporated the Georgian Kingdom and Church, much older than Russia, and tried hard to denationalize them. It is doubtful if Stalin ever hated the Orthodox Church *per se* as Yaroslavsky did, or despised it as Lenin. He certainly had no vocation for the priesthood, and so left the seminary without any scandal in 1898. Nevertheless, the seminary stamped him for life, as Boris Souvarine and Eugen Lyons convincingly show in their *Lives of Stalin*. From the seminary Stalin brought with him the love for severe discipline and obedience of inferiors to superiors, Spartan simplicity of life, personal purity of living, taste for dogmatizing and scholastic definitions and a peculiar language. The subsequent career of Stalin is well known. A worker in Baku, professional revolutionary since 1901, prisoner, exile and conspirator alternately until 1917, he became a close associate of Lenin in that year and the general secretary of the Bolshevik Party five years later. After the death of Lenin in 1923, the struggle between his lieutenants for the leadership of the Revolution was inevitable. Stalin won this struggle with much labour. First he ousted the brilliant demagogue, internationalist and visionary, Leon Trotsky. In 1923 the Russian masses were weary after the long civil war and opposed to any adventure

abroad to promote the World Revolution. Besides, the Lenin "Nep" or partial return to capitalism made the masses suspicious of any left policy. Stalin constituted himself the champion of Socialism in one country as distinct from the World Revolution, and so ousted Trotsky. Having done that, Stalin appropriated quietly the Trotsky programme of intensive industrialization in order to meet any possible military menace from abroad, and of the collectivization of peasants to forestall any return to the bourgeois economy. The industrialization and the collectivization produced inevitably the recrudescence of utopian Communism, which was obnoxious to the methodical and practical Stalin, with his sense of realities. Besides, the utopians were positively dangerous to him in combination with the right-wing Bolsheviks, who dreamed of some kind of democracy and peasant pacification. The assassination of Sergius Kirov in Leningrad in 1934 enabled Stalin to silence at once all opponents. In May, 1935, the Society of Old Bolsheviks was liquidated. The Association of Former Political Prisoners and the Communist Academy were dissolved afterwards. Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Bukharin, Piatakov and many other opponents of Stalin in the party were shot, as were many marshals, generals and admirals. By these executions Stalin was freed at once of internationalists associated with Trotsky, of mechanists and moderates led by Bukharin, and of the Tukhachevsky group, who dreamed of military dictatorship.

Many persons are puzzled to know why the Russian people submitted to the industrialization and collectivization, which claimed millions of victims, and failed to protest against the treason trials. The explanation

is simple. The young generation was behind Stalin. He taught it and inspired it to follow him. The decline of internationalism, which became clear after the assassination of Kirov, revived the interest of the Soviet public in the history, art, science of its fatherland. The great figures of Russian history now came to be extolled, films were produced to glorify Peter the Great and St. Alexander Nevsky, imperial military and naval ranks and uniforms were restored, the social etiquette of the Empire was revived, the old classical writers were praised and reprinted. The new ruling class was interested only in preserving its conquests, and the masses, after so many years of trials and wars, desired solely to be left in peace. Though many thousands of clergymen perished during the collectivization drive and many more were shot during the treason trials, accused of being Trotskyists, Bukharinists or followers of Tukhachevsky, nevertheless the whole situation began to look more promising for the Church. Anton Ciliga in his remarkable book, published in France in 1938 and translated into English in 1940, *The Russian Enigma*,* states: "One must not forget that to-day there exist three organized social forces in Russia. (1) The Communist bureaucracy that governs the State, the military machine and the so-called workers' organizations. (2) The Y.T.R. or technical personnel—that is, autonomous syndical sections in which are found non-Party intellectuals. (3) The Church and the sects. As to the workers and the peasants, they have no free and autonomous organizations. After this the importance of the Church in the social struggle will be readily

* George Routledge, London, 1940, pp. 247-8.

understood. I have already mentioned the efforts made by Stalin to ensure the secret collaboration of the Orthodox Church. The 'engineers' in the days when they reckoned on the fall of the Stalinist system did exactly the same." Ciliga mentions how an important ecclesiastic was approached with a view of securing the support of the Church but declined to help because the new Soviet Churchmen are opposed generally to the restoration of capitalism. In the end of his book Ciliga, describing the situation in Russia after the great purges, expresses his personal view about it: "The Revolution is over. The Five Year Plan is finished. The Soviet volcano is cooling and, in cooling, seeks its equilibrium. . . . They [the new rulers] fight for the inheritance of the Revolution. The masters—that is to say, the two groups of Communists and non-Party bureaucrats. The former have the Party and the workers' organizations at their disposal; they have a predominating influence in the administration and in the Army. The non-Communist bureaucrats, consisting of intellectuals and technicians, direct the production and command the workers in workshops and heavy industries. They direct a highly centralized, corporate organization, the Y.T.R. or technical personnel; this is very important in the State apparatus and in the Army, and has the support of one of the most powerful and most secret forces in Russia, the Church. For one must never forget that the important strata of the people who no longer believe in the Revolution have faith in the Church, which has succeeded in modernizing itself" (pp. 285-286). After a very interesting analysis of the position in the Soviet Union after the execution of marshals and

complete isolation of the ruling bureaucracy from the masses, Ciliga expresses the following view: "To prevent a military dictatorship, all Stalin has to do is to succeed in reconciling the two bureaucracies with one another and with the Church. But to carry out this task, even Stalin may be too compromised by reason of his revolutionary past—too Trotskyist, in fact" (p. 286).

It is clear that the war provides Stalin with a rare opportunity to finish the complicated task which Ciliga assigned to him. The predictions of Ciliga, that thoughtful Yugoslav Communist, who spent ten years in Russia, first as a member of the ruling class and afterwards in prisons as a suspected Trotskyist, were partly fulfilled. In order to fill the void into which the Party fell after the continuous purges and growing estrangement from the masses, Stalin introduced his Constitution in 1936. This Constitution proclaimed the Soviet Union to be the State of workers, who are equal among themselves. The Constitution abolished the disabilities imposed upon priests, noblemen, former police officers, kulaks, ex-capitalists. They were all recognized as full Soviet citizens with the right to elect to the Soviet Parliament and to occupy the highest State positions. All enquiries into the social origin of candidates for scholarships, government positions, etc., were forbidden. Nobody could be refused a grant or a job on the ground that he is the son of a priest. Otherwise the Constitution did not change much. Its 124th article states: "To secure to the citizens freedom of conscience the Church in U.S.S.R. is separated from the State and the school from the Church. The freedom of religious worship and

of anti-religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens."

Nevertheless some concessions to Churchmen were granted soon: bell ringing and the collection of funds for churches were allowed in 1936; the public performance of blasphemous plays and films as well as the anti-Christmas and anti-Easter carnivals were prohibited by Stalin in 1938; manuals of history, ridiculing Russian Christianity, were taken away from schools in the same year; mass observance of Christmas and Easter festivals was recognized and workers were not prosecuted for absenteeism during these days; manufacture and sale of objects connected with worship were allowed to the State enterprises; and in 1938, ikon painters of the Mstera district were permitted to exercise their trade in the following year; and so on. Finally, by the decree of June 26, 1940, the former week of seven days was restored and Sunday made the compulsory weekly holiday in spite of the strenuous opposition of the Godless.

On the other hand, in order to pacify the atheists and to liquidate conveniently the potentially dangerous prelates, particularly those near to the Red Army, executions of the clergy continued regularly after the proclamation of the Constitution. In 1938 alone the Metropolitan Theophan of Nijni-Novgorod, Archbishop Methodius of the Far East, Bishops Anthony, Alexander of Tver, Vladimir, Nicholas, Agathangel of Tambov, and others, were shot as spies and conspirators and over fifty other prelates imprisoned. The number of priests, monks and laymen shot during the same year, as the aftermath of the great purges, is unknown, but must be high. At the same time the

rent for the use of churches, which belong to the State, was raised enormously. In this way in 1937 alone 1,900 places of worship were closed down, including 1,100 Orthodox churches, 115 synagogues, 110 mosques, 240 Catholic churches, 61 Lutheran ones, etc.* After January, 1938, the rent was again raised by 120 per cent., and the smallest church in Moscow had to pay £2,500 rent a year in English money in order to remain open.† The antireligious propaganda in the Army, schools, and kolhoses was intensified.

What were the results of these enormous efforts to destroy religion? According to the January number of *Bezbojnik* for 1935, on the eve of the Revolution the Russian Church possessed 46,457 churches, 21,747 chapels, 497 monasteries, and 419 convents. The figures, as we may see, differ much from those which we quoted for 1914 in the first chapter. The difference is due probably to the loss of many provinces during the war of 1914-17. The number of clergy was given as 50,960 priests, 15,210 deacons, 45,705 cantors, 17,430 monks, and 52,032 nuns. According to *Irénikon*,‡ the number of the religious associations in U.S.S.R. was 33,839 in 1937. In the same year the Soviet Home Office received about 15,000 applications for registration. 28,000 religious associations were without ministers. Their annual income was about £10,000,000 in English money (taking £1 equal to

* *Irénikon*, No. 1, 1938, p. 56.

† The Soviet Ambassador in London stated in his speech to the American Chamber of Commerce, reported in *The Times* on September 27, 1941, that no rent is charged now for churches.

‡ No. 2, 1938, p. 172.

10 roubles, a purely nominal evaluation), against much more than £50,000,000 before the Russo-German War of 1914. The income was received from the sale of candles, ikons, etc., and collections. At the same time the associations paid about £14,500,000 in rent and taxes in 1937. Many parishes were unable to hire the appropriate buildings and congregated in halls, private houses, etc. At that period 75 to 80 per cent. of all Orthodox churches in Russia followed the Metropolitan Sergius of Moscow, who succeeded to the Patriarch Tikhon in 1927 as the virtual ruler of the Church. Mr. Paul Anderson, in his valuable article "New Statistics on Religion in the U.S.S.R.,"* estimated the number of churches subject to the Metropolitan Sergius as about 14,400. The Renovators he estimated as having 2,876 churches in 1936, a great drop since 1925, when they claimed 17,000 parishes. The remainder belonged to the few scattered groups: Gregorians, etc. According to Dr. Peter Hendrix, a regular visitor to Moscow, the number of Orthodox parishes there diminished from 40 in 1937 to 25 in 1938.† In November, 1939, it was as low as 15, against 10 collegiate and 351 parish churches at the beginning of the century. A correspondent wrote then to the Metropolitan Anastasius, President of the Episcopal Synod of the Russian Church Abroad: "There are altogether in Moscow 15 to 20 churches, including the Roman Catholic church, a synagogue and a mosque. The churches are continually disappearing. Each parish is governed by a council of twenty people. They are responsible to

* *Sobornost*, September, 1938.

† *Irénikon*, 1938, No. 4.

the Government and the law for taxes, maintenance, and for absence of political propaganda in the Church. These twenty persons are registered in the local Soviet. In practice everything is done by three people. The collections in churches go to maintain the clergy. Besides, the priests usually work as artisans—as cabinet-makers, cobblers, watch-makers, etc. All good priests of indomitable spirit are deported and only the very old remain, or those of weak disposition. The latter are suspect in the eyes of the parishioners because the State obliges priests to report about the tendencies of their people. One parishioner said: “We are abandoned. Only the weak elements remain.” It is imperative to prepare the new clergy abroad. There are fewer Orthodox now, but their faith is stronger. Young people of seventeen to twenty are absent from the faithful. It is necessary to approach this youth with love and not with prejudice because they are educated in the Soviet ideology. As no Church conference is allowed, Church life is irregular. Each bishop is master in his diocese. There are many secret priests.* The Godless leader Yaroslavsky estimated the number of believers in 1937 at about 80 millions. One-third of the population in villages were unbelievers and about two-thirds in towns.† The article of Professor Nikolsky in *Bezbojnik* of June 21, 1940, frankly admitted that more than one-half of the population still believes. That means 90 millions, incorporated provinces included, and about 60 millions of Orthodox, against 110 millions in 1917, according to the estimate of the Paris Dominicans quoted in the first chapter.

* *Hleb Nebesni*, Harbin, June, 1940.

† *Irénikon*, 1938, No. 1.

The *Antireligiosnik* a few months later deplored the fact that one-half of the working people in cities still believed in God, and there was hardly any convinced atheist in villages.*

The Soviet Press Bureau in London published in the *Soviet War News* on August 22, 1941, very interesting statistics about the religious denominations in Russia in 1940. The number of the religious associations is still given as 30,000, a drop of 3,000 as against 1937, in spite of the incorporation of the new provinces. The number of licensed places of worship is given as 8,338, with 52,442 ministers. It is clear that most associations use as before private premises for their cult. The number of Orthodox churches in use is given as 4,225, against 46,457 in 1917, a drop of 90 per cent. There are only 5,665 priests now, against 50,960 before the Revolution. This decrease is also about 90 per cent. With the deacons it is less: 3,100 against 15,210, a drop of about 80 per cent. There are now 28 Orthodox bishops, against 130 before the Revolution, a decrease of 75 per cent. The *Bulletin* states that the Orthodox Church is ruled by the Metropolitan Sergius, *locum tenens* of the Patriarchial Throne, and the few surviving Renovators administered by the Metropolitan Vitalius. There are still 37 Orthodox monasteries in U.S.S.R., against 1,026 in 1914. The Orthodox Church is still quite strong among the workers. There are 346 parishes in Yaroslavl district, 225 in Moscow district, and 187 in Ivanovo region. All these districts are heavily industrialized and Moscow district is the stronghold of the Godless. The *Bulletin* gives the

* *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, Berne, January-June, 1941.

number of the Evangelical congregations as 1,000, against 3,000 in 1933, as quoted by Dr. Julius Hecker in his *Religion and Communism*. Such an enormous drop I have already explained. The Bolsheviki during the first decade of the Revolution used the Evangelicals to annoy and to weaken the Orthodox. The Evangelicals enjoyed many privileges denied to the Orthodox and were able to develop a widespread propaganda and convert millions. Then the Bolsheviki stepped in, amending the Constitution, and soon a rapid decline began. The number of German Evangelical chapels, which numbered also Estonians, Latvians and others in their congregations, was 800 before the Revolution, with 230 pastors. Because of the constant imprisonments, there were fewer than a dozen serving pastors in 1936.* It seems that non-Russian Evangelicals are included in the Soviet figure given above. Nothing is said about the number of parishes or clergy for the Russian Old Believers, who numbered about 20 millions before 1917. It is only stated that the Episcopalian branch is ruled by the Metropolitan Irinarh. The number of Catholic churches in U.S.S.R. is given as 1,744, with 2,309 priests. As almost all Roman Catholic churches were closed down in Soviet Russia many years ago, and according to *Osservatore Romano* of April 11, 1937, there were only 10 serving priests in U.S.S.R., the present large number of the Catholic churches must be explained by the incorporation into the Soviet Union of many millions of the Catholics of Latin and Eastern rites from Poland (Galicia),

* The statement by Count Keyzerling, quoted by J. Bivort de la Saudée, *Communism and Anti-religion*, p. 48.

Lithuania and Latvia. The Galician Uniate Church alone had about 2,444 parish churches, served by 2,447 priests.* These figures show also that a number of Catholic churches were undoubtedly closed by Bolsheviks in 1939 after the incorporation. The Armenians suffered worst of all. They have now only 9 parishes in the whole Union, but their Catholicate is still fixed in Echmiadzin in Soviet Armenia. The Archbishop Gevork Charek, *locum tenens*, rules from Echmiadzin the Armenians in the whole world.

* *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, Paris, 1938, cxxv.-cxxvii.

CHAPTER V

THE OUTLOOK

AFTER the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 the Russian Orthodox Church, which includes more than two-thirds of all "believers" in the Soviet republics, passed through long years of suffering and persecutions and survived. It was deprived of juridical rights in 1918 and all its properties, from the landed estates to the smallest object of cult, were confiscated by the State. Its clergy for nineteen years were deprived of all civil rights and considered as outcasts. Since 1929 the Church has lost all right to conduct religious propaganda. It was forbidden to open libraries or reading rooms, to organize excursions, children's playgrounds, literary or religious circles, or even groups for Bible study. No religious literature was allowed to be printed. The buildings were continually taken away by means of enormous taxation, while the clergy were registered and supervised by the secret police. All religious instruction of children was forbidden. On the other hand, since the foundation of the Godless Union in 1926 the most intensive antireligious propaganda was conducted in schools, villages, factories, press, Red Army, with the ready help of the State.

What are the results of so many years of persecutions, shooting and imprisonment of clergy and faithful laity, confiscations, and Godless propaganda? According to a rough estimate, based on Soviet sources only, the

Orthodox Church has since the Revolution lost about one half of its flock, one third of its parishes (now 20,000 against 30,000), three quarters of its bishops, 90 per cent. of its clergy and 97 per cent. of its monasteries. It has lost, besides, all its schools, seminaries, theological academies, and other institutions. Nevertheless, it still exists and even extends its borders. In fact it is growing just as the Godless Union is shrinking in spite of all efforts to revive it.

Why and how has the Church survived the Revolution, and what is the outlook for the future? It survived because, as the most logical of all atheists, Felix Le Dantec, put it, no man can live by atheism. If there is no God, and no meaning in universe and life, then there is no science, no art, no ethics, nothing to live for. In a strict atheist society men will commit suicide once they have exhausted their animal pleasures and realized that the world is meaningless.

Soviet Pantheism, while rejecting the thoroughgoing atheism of the mechanists, is inadequate to satisfy the human soul. It appeals to the young, with its passion for building and reforming, and its powerful herd mentality, but it is absolutely unable to console anyone who has lost his wife or child or is afflicted with an incurable disease. Bolshevism could not solve the problem of pain and suffering. No amount of socialist state-building will remove sickness, pain, old age, jealousy, envy, human selfishness, loss of dear ones and the sting of death. Neither can art or science solve these problems; but religion does, and therefore it will remain for ever.

How did the Russian Church survive the Red storm? By martyrdom and by adjustment to the new con-

ditions. The long and bloody persecution purified the Church. All weak, unstable and alien elements left it. Only those people remained in the Church who were ready to suffer and to die for it. The Church became much smaller, but purer. Again the Church adjusted itself to the new conditions. It adjusted itself in two directions at once, trying to find a *modus vivendi* with the Godless Government, as the Metropolitan Sergius did, or opposing it, as many adversaries of that prelate preferred. Anton Ciliga speaks in these words about the followers of the Metropolitan Sergius: "To them the future of the Church was linked with that of the State, albeit a Soviet State. The task of the Church therefore was not only to spread faith in God, but also to spread the principle of submission to the powers that be. The policy of forced collectivization and the peasant risings did not alter their views. On the contrary, the Church supported the Government at its most critical moment, banking on the fact that the Government would remember this, and would later recognize the rights of the Church. The symbolic gesture that crowned this policy was the introduction into the Church services of a prayer for the Soviet Government."* How far the Metropolitan Sergius succeeded with his co-operation with the Godless Government it is difficult to say. It is clear, however, that he maintains tolerably good relations with the Government, which trusts him. All prelates who opposed him perished. Indeed, the Government often considered any opposition to the Metropolitan Sergius as a defiance to itself, as Ciliga clearly shows in his book. Again, the policy of collaboration with the

* A. Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma*, p. 161.

Soviets attracted to the Orthodox Church many recruits from the Communist Party itself. During the great purge of the Party in 1938, 6,676 members of it were expelled because they practised religion.* The number of believers was still higher among the Communist youth. Many noted Communists belonging to the highest Soviet society even entered the ranks of the clergy; for instance, Bishop Eugenius of Rostov, Colonel Sergius Voroshilov, brother of the marshal, Tatiana Yaroslavsky, niece of the Godless leader, a son of Lunacharsky, etc.† The number of men in uniform is large in the Soviet churches and is growing.‡ The Church attracts the best elements in Soviet society. Those Churchmen who opposed the Metropolitan Sergius and went into an underground existence did as much as he to preserve Russian Christianity. They did particularly great work in the districts where all churches were closed down during the collectivization drive. These priests, who refused to register themselves with the Secret Service, invaded the collectivized districts as artisans: cobblers, watchmakers, tailors, etc. The *Bezbojnik* in its issue of April 21, 1939, describes these priests: "The wandering priest carries the Church in his suitcase. He is dressed in ordinary workman's clothes, but carries about his Mass vestments, chalice and ikon. He visits secret meetings of worship, distributes communion, performs wedding ceremonies, blesses baptismal water which the parents keep for christening their babies in the priest's absence, and after the

* *Irénikon*, 1938, No. 5.

† *Irénikon*, 1938, No. 2, etc.

‡ *The Month*, September-October, 1941, p. 418.

meeting visits the sick. He then wanders off to the next village.”* Once established in a village, they began gradually to gather around them a small nucleus of faithful, and a clandestine parish was started. In time a few daughter congregations were established in the neighbouring villages as missionary out-stations. Each daughter congregation was headed by a devout layman, who led services and did everything that a layman can do, including preparation for marriage, taking secret baptisms and funerals, catechizing, etc. Often the secret police were lucky enough to discover these secret associations, and all concerned were shot or deported. Then everything was started all over again. Since 1936 there has been a tendency for these secret parishes to go back into full light and to seek legalization through the usual form of registration with the Soviet authorities.

Besides these secret parishes there are in U.S.S.R. a good number of clandestine monasteries. The most renowned of them was that of the Gate of St. Peter in Moscow, near the Kremlin, liquidated in 1938. It was a double monastery. The monks and the nuns obeyed the same abbot, Bishop Bartholomew. Their life was very strict and they spread Christian doctrine among the Soviet intellectuals. Outwardly both communities were just usual Soviet communal houses.†

Similar monasteries were discovered also in Murom, Krasnogorsk in Ukraine, Nijni Novgorod, etc. Many exist still in the Ural Mountains, Middle Volga, Siberia, and Turkestan. The same tendency to seek legalization is observed in them as in the clandestine parishes.

* *The Month*, September-October, 1941, p. 414.

† *Irénikon*, No. 2, 1939.

Prophesying is always notoriously dangerous, and it is still more so at present, when the whole world lives in an atmosphere of excitement and sudden and violent transformations. Nevertheless, the outlook for the Christian Church in Russia is better than it was even a few years ago. The Church survived the Civil War, great persecutions and the most intense antireligious propaganda. The old Bolshevik generation, who inspired the persecution, is dead, and the new generation has no hatred for the Church. It often does not know the Church, but when they discover it the young people are rather attracted to the Church than repelled by it. Its ethical principles, the beauty of its worship, its saints and its art, appeal to the young.* The State, still nominally Godless, drops gradually its antireligious bias. There are many reasons to suppose that eventually a satisfactory *modus vivendi* between the State and the Church will be reached, and the latter will regain freedom of propaganda and the possibility of organizing its life on a more permanent basis than at present.

Dr. Julius Hecker, in his book *Religion and Communism*, written in Moscow in 1933, foresaw already the present religious revival in the Soviet Union. He wrote: "I cannot help thinking that future generations of Russian people will *rediscover* Jesus, whose historicity is now denied and whose gospel is now rapidly being obscured in the memory of the present generation. Will the rediscovered Jesus be the crucified Son of Man, the martyred prophet of an unpopular cause, or will He be Jesus the poet, the friend of the flowers,

* How widely spread is the religious revival in the Soviet youth may be gathered from the excellent article of Mr. G. M. Godden in *The Month*, September-October, 1941.

the birds, and the little children, or will He be Jesus Christ the *Logos* manifested . . . who can tell? The mystery of the cross, of the innocent sufferer, may be never solved. The new social order cannot be a painless, static fool's paradise; so long as the laws of nature continue to function there will be inexplicable suffering to contend with. The appearance of human self-consciousness is a gloriously bright light in the shadow of the universe. Has it its constant beyond the effervescent manifestation we call Life? This will probably always remain a mystery, and hence the object of faith and contemplation."*

The signs of religious revival became very numerous from 1939 onwards. The Soviet papers and magazines, such as *Pravda*, *Komsomolskya Pravda*, *Bezbojnik* and *Antireligiosnik*, dwelt continually in 1939-1941 on the growing strength of religion in the U.S.S.R. Crowds of soldiers visit the churches in Ukraine, Estonia and Galicia, and order Masses and other services for their intentions. The numerous collective farms arrange the solemn observance of the religious feasts. The children openly go to the churches and pray in schools. The college and university students desert the Godless cells and declare the materialistic explanation of life and the universe unsatisfying.†

The Russo-German War undoubtedly accelerated the process of religious revival. It obliged also the Soviet Government to be more tolerant towards Churchmen. Already it was very careful to avoid

* *Religion and Communism*, p. 273.

† Vide *The Tablet*, and the *Eastern Churches Quarterly* for 1940 and 1941, also "Religion in the U.S.S.R. To-day," Cambridge Summer School Lectures, 1939.

the antagonizing of the Uniates of Galicia and the Orthodox of Volhynia, taken from Poland in 1939. No bishop was shot or deported, though they were quite frank in their views about the Soviet régime. Very few priests suffered. In Galicia even the greater part of the country parishes' endowments was left intact. It is true that the Bolsheviks introduced in Galicia and Volhynia the usual Soviet antireligious legislation concerning Church endowments, schools, etc., but nothing similar to the tragedies of the Spanish Civil War ever happened. To the Polish and Lithuanian Catholics and the Baltic Protestants the Bolsheviks were considerably less lenient, but even in their case no bloody excesses can be quoted.

The German invasion, accompanied by intense propaganda in Russian and Ukrainian, which aimed at obtaining the support of Soviet Churchmen for the alleged German plan to restore Christianity in Russia, obliged the Soviet Government to be extremely careful in its Church policy. On the whole Soviet Churchmen remained loyal to the Government. At the very beginning of the war, on June 28, 1941, the Metropolitan Sergius, *locum tenens* of the Patriarchal Throne of Russia, supported by 26 priests, sang the solemn service of intercession for Russia and her Army in his cathedral in Moscow, which was filled by 12,000 people. Similar services took place all over Russia, and the pastoral letter of the *locum tenens* was read, in which he called upon the faithful to defend the fatherland and appealed to the clergy to pray and to succour the victims of the war. It is said that this event was mentioned in the Soviet broadcast—in its foreign programme at least. The

German advance, accompanied by the closing of the Godless museums and the reopening of the shut-up churches, where the Orthodox priests were invited to sing solemn thanksgiving services before the German officers, produced new changes in Soviet Church politics. In order to counteract the German efforts to seduce Churchmen under the pretext that the German Army was engaged in the restoration of religion amidst the ruins of the Godless institutions, the Soviet radio began to mention the Orthodox Church in its Russian programme. It broadcast in October the resolution of the Russo-American Orthodox parish in Reading, Pa., U.S.A., which called upon all Russo-Americans to support the Soviet Government in its struggle with Germany. As there are over 300 parishes in U.S.A., with 400,000 Russian faithful, their influence in the United States is not negligible. Shortly afterwards the Soviet radio broadcast the telegram of Bishop Dionisios, Ordinary of the Serbian diocese in America, to the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, in which the Bishop wrote: "We follow with pride the heroic struggle of the Russian people against the Antichrist, and pray for the victory of Russian arms."* Clearly these broadcasts were intended to contradict the German propaganda, urging that the Orthodox Churches generally and the Russian parishes abroad particularly are supporting the German crusade.

The German penetration into Russia failed to realize the German hopes of the rapid dissolution of the Soviet régime. Not only did the old Soviet territories fail to rebel against Stalin, but no trace of

* *The Tablet*, October 18, 1941.

rebellion was observed in the newly annexed Galicia, Bessarabia, Volhynia and Western White Russia. The Uniate and the Orthodox clergy certainly abstained from supporting the German advance. The news from Galicia and Volhynia testified that the retreating Soviet armies did not shoot any bishop, Orthodox or Uniate, or massacre the clergy. Again, no clerical name appeared in the Soviet press among those who were executed for subversive activities in the rear of the Red Army. It seems that the Soviet Government became still more tolerant to Churchmen so far as its official Godless doctrine allows. The Bishop of Fulham stated recently that he received a letter from Moscow in which he was informed that the Soviet Government allows the Orthodox priests serving in the ranks of the Red Army to act as unofficial military chaplains (it was customary in the French Army from 1906).*

The Soviet-Polish understanding provided the Bolsheviks with an occasion for improving the badly strained relations with the Roman Catholics. Imperial Russia possessed twelve Roman Catholic dioceses, divided into two provinces: that of Warsaw and that of Mohilev. These dioceses numbered in the last years of the Empire about 2,900 parishes, with 3,300 churches and 2,000 chapels, served by 4,600 priests. The number of the faithful, chiefly Poles, was estimated at 13 millions.† After the fall of the Empire, the restoration of the Polish State and the appearance of the Baltic Republics, the number of the Roman Catholics in Russia diminished greatly. Only two

* *Church Times*, October 3, 1941.

† *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. xiii, p. 259.

dioceses, that of Mohilev and Tiraspol, remained in Soviet Russia. On account of the strained Russo-Polish relations since 1920 and the hatred of the Vatican on the part of the Godless, these dioceses were subjected to extreme rigours. Since the expulsion of Archbishops Roop and Zepliak from Russia in the first years of the Soviet régime, no Roman Catholic bishop resided in Russia until 1925, when Mgr. d'Herbigny, French Jesuit bishop, consecrated a few new bishops for the Roman Catholics in Russia by special delegation of Pius XI. These bishops, however, were very quickly imprisoned or deported. The Catholic clergy decreased alarmingly. According to *Osservatore Romano*, April 11, 1937, only ten Catholic priests remained free in Russia at that date. Few isolated Catholic parishes out of the former 500 survived in the Soviet Union until 1939, when several Uniate and Latin dioceses of Poland were incorporated into the Soviet Union. In 1940 another group of Latin dioceses was incorporated into the Soviet Union from the Baltic States. The Bolsheviks received then a large Catholic population. They proved lenient to the Uniates of Galicia, leaving their churches open and many endowments intact.*

To the Poles, and still more to the Lithuanians and Latvians, the Bolsheviks were much harsher. In Polish White Russia and Volhynia alone the Bolsheviks closed during their occupation 300 churches and 1,000 church schools, chiefly Roman Catholic. In the Lithuanian capital, Vilna, 12 Roman Catholic churches out of 30 odd were closed, etc.† It is clear that these

* *Eastern Churches Quarterly*, April, 1941.

† *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, Berne, January-June, 1941.

acts only embittered the relations between the Roman See and the Bolsheviks.

The Soviet-Polish agreement did something to improve the situation. The Bolshevik Government agreed to the appointment of forty or fifty military chaplains to the Polish divisions to be formed in Russia. Fr. Włodzimierz Cienski, former Rector of the Church of St. Mary Magdalen in Lvov, was appointed Chaplain-General. The Soviet Government granted also the use of the French church in Moscow to the Polish colony in that city.* It is expected that 150 Polish priests, Soviet citizens, who still linger in the concentration camps, will be freed and the existing Polish churches in the U.S.S.R. reopened.† As there are still about 2 millions of Roman Catholics in the Soviet Union, chiefly of Polish extraction, they cannot be overlooked entirely in the consideration of the outlook for Christianity in Russia. It is interesting to note that in spite of the severe persecution of the Roman Catholics in Russia under the Reds there are found, nevertheless, priests who openly support the Soviet régime in its fight against the Germans. Fr. Florent, Rector of the Catholic parish in Leningrad and a Frenchman by birth, actually published an appeal in the Soviet press to all Frenchmen living in the U.S.S.R., calling upon them to join General de Gaulle and to fight with Great Britain and the Soviet Union against Hitler, greatest enemy of European society.‡

The careful handling of the Roman Catholics is a

* *The Times*, October 3, 1941.

† *Catholic Times*, October 10, 1941.

‡ *Oxford Mail*, July 12, 1941.

difficult task for the Soviet rulers, as it is closely connected with American aid to the Soviet Union. Until the question is settled satisfactorily there will be a strong opposition to the full participation of the United States in the great conflict raging now in the world, and American help will remain inadequate. It will be idle to deny that the powerful Roman Catholic body in America is opposed to any extension of aid to Soviet Russia. *The Evangelist*, of Albany, N.Y., states clearly the American Catholic view on the subject: "No Christian who appreciates what Russia really is can have any enthusiasm for President Roosevelt's decision to make us a part of the Soviet's war. In fact, giving aid for the defence and preservation of this Communistic State might well appeal to many Christians as valid grounds for becoming conscientious objectors. Russia's avowed aim is to destroy Christianity and to kill off all forms of belief in God. - Where is the sense or justification for American Christians to give or lend their money, the product of their machines and the labour of their men, to sharpen the Red sword for their own kill?"*

Many powerful Protestant groups in America share the same opinions. President Roosevelt is much circumscribed in his activity by these groups.

The Soviet diplomatists in London, Washington and elsewhere understand perfectly well the need to gain the sympathies of Anglo-American Churchmen. Their speeches, pamphlets, propaganda films and exhibitions are clear witnesses. They are handicapped, however, by the existence of the 13th article in the Communist Party programme and of the 124th article of the Soviet

* *The Lamp*, September, 1941, Graymoor, N.Y., U.S.A.

Constitution, which are definitely antireligious, barely granting freedom of worship.

Nevertheless, it may be taken for granted that the Bolsheviks are genuinely anxious to settle somehow the religious problem and to find a *modus vivendi* with the Church. The external and internal situation urges them to do so. In these conditions we may expect quite reasonably not only that any return to the era of intense religious persecution is unthinkable, but that the Soviet concessions to Churchmen will grow further, and may eventually create real religious freedom in the Soviet Union.

The Church of Christ is eternal. It survived the Roman Empire, the dark ages, disorders and troubles of every kind, invasions, revolutions, wars. It Christianized the most unlikely societies and institutions. It may Christianize the Soviet State as well.

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